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EXCHANGE RATES

	YESTERDAY	PREVIOUS
YEN	113.95	114.15
PESO	38.2875	38.655
HK\$	7.748	7.7487
BAHT	36.375	37.205
RUPEE	42.495	42.49
WON	1179.3	1184.00
In U.S. dollar terms		
		Source: Associated Press

25¢

INSIDE

THE NATION



IMPEACHMENT TRIAL

Rep. Steve Buyer, R-Ind., holds a copy of the Constitution during his presentation to the Senate. He delivers opening statements in the impeachment trial of President Clinton.

■ Senate jurors sparred Sunday over whether witnesses should testify at President Clinton's impeachment trial. Democrats pledged to call their own witnesses, including Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr and informant Linda Tripp, if the Republicans press forward. **14**

LOCAL

■ Legislators are looking at the 902 talks as venue to resolve "misunderstanding" between the CNMI and the federal government over issues that led to a proposal to strip local control of immigration and labor. **Reyes 2**



ASIA

■ China's already grim unemployment situation will worsen this year with more layoffs from state firms and more youths entering the job market, the official China Daily reported Sunday. **13**

THE WORLD

■ Russian President Boris Yeltsin was hospitalized Sunday for at least the fifth time since his 1996 re-election, this time for what the Kremlin described as an acute bleeding ulcer. **17**



Yeltsin



A young student from Illinois asked Congressman Henry Hyde, head of the House Judiciary Committee, to have President Clinton write an essay about lying. "Until he admits he lied, only then can I believe him again".

902 talks begin

■ CNMI debunks Stayman's claim of 'agreement' on immigration

By COOKIE B. MICALLER
Staff Reporter

Crucial meetings under Section 702 of the Covenant open today between the Northern Marianas and the United States with little prospects that the two sides could make progress in closing wide gaps on how problems on local immigration and labor should be resolved.

Both sides failed to hammer out a common agenda prior to the opening of the four-day "informal" discussions, and local officials preferred that specific talking points be discussed when they convene this morning at the Hyatt.

President Bill Clinton's special representative to the bilateral talks,



Edward B. Cohen, suggested in an interview last night that the local government did not oppose Washington's proposal to discuss transition.

"I'm not sure if there's any question that we'll be discussing that. I had some correspondence with the lieutenant governor and he knows that those issues are on the agenda," Cohen said.

Negotiations were canceled twice last year by the Northern Marianas after Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio had been called to testify before the US Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources in March which heard several proposals on federal takeover. It was again called off by

See Parties on Page 5

THE PLAYERS

CNMI PANEL

Head
Lt. Gov. Jesus R. Sablan .

Members

- Senate President Paul A. Manglona
- House Speaker Diego T. Benavente
- Rota Mayor Benjamin T. Manglona
- Tinian Sen. Joaquin Adriano
- Retired Supreme Court Justice Ramon Villagomez
- Saipan Chamber of Commerce President Kerry Deets
- Howard Willens, resource person

U.S. PANEL

Head
Edward B. Cohen, Deputy Director, Department of the Interior

Resource Persons

- Dan Sweeney, head Fair Labor Standard Office of the Wage and

Hour Division, Department of Labor

- Alexander Gisser, associate general counsel, Immigration and Naturalization Service
- Jay Dowling, director, Industry Assessment Division, Office of Textiles and Apparel, Department of Commerce
- Tim Elliot, Solicitor's Office, Department of the Interior

BACKGROUND

The four-day talks are expected to focus on CNMI's labor and immigration problems. Consultations were last held in 1992 in San Diego, California during the administration of former governor Larry Guerrero. Former governor Froilan C. Tenorio withdrew from the talks after President Clinton proposed a federal takeover. Tenorio hired the Seattle-based law firm Preston, Gates, Rouvelas & Meads to lobby against federalization.



SIGN OF THE TIMES

Esprit, a favorite shop of tourists and non-resident workers, will be closing this week as the tourism economy remains sluggish.

JOHN S. DELROSARIO JR.

NMC seeks scholarship fund boost

By BENHUR C. SALADORES
Staff Reporter

The Northern Marianas College yesterday sought assistance from the legislature to funnel more than \$500,000 in government funds into a critical scholarship program for some 530 students enrolled this spring semester.

College officials met with some members from the Senate and the House of Representatives to lobby for additional money in a bid to shore up the rapidly depleting funds in light of a budget cut implemented by the Tenorio administration for the second quarter.

NMC, led by its President Agnes M. McPhetres, expressed concern over a recent decision by the administration not to allocate funds into the program — a move which may imperil the education of close

See Legislature on Page 5

Legislators want end to U.S.-CNMI 'misunderstanding' on brewing issues

By BENHUR C. SALADORES
Staff Reporter

Legislative leaders yesterday expressed optimism on the resumption of consultation talks between the CNMI and the United States aimed to iron out differences that have soured bilateral relations, saying they will raise strong opposition against a federal takeover.

While their meeting with Edward B. Cohen, President Clinton's special representative to the 902 talks, will be informal, key members of the CNMI Legislature said it served as an opportunity to exchange views on issues affecting relations with Washington.

Contentious topics on local labor and immigration will inevitably be brought up in the discussion when Cohen meets with lawmakers on Thursday on Tinian as part of his four-day visit on the island to resume the talks provided under Section 902 of the Covenant.

According to Senate Floor leader Pete P. Reyes, they are looking at the meeting as a venue to strongly voice out their opposition against the White House's plan to strip local authority on immigration and minimum wage laws on the island.

The proposal — a Clinton's agenda despite split views in the U.S. Congress — has largely aided a strained relations in recent years, clouding any joint action to solve social and economic problems dogging the Northern Marianas.

"We want this misunderstanding to be understood this time," Reyes said in an interview. "I will be completely honest and straightforward with (Cohen) and say that the people of the CNMI and their elected officials are strongly opposed to any takeover move."

Senate President Paul A. Manglona pointed out that lawmakers are hoping to tackle what they consider as federal misconception on CNMI situation that has cited their failure and inadequacies to undertake labor and immigration reforms.

"The meeting is very healthy for our people especially in the media where there is a lot of negative publicity about us not doing anything to correct the situation," he said.

"This is the only opportunity to present a true picture to Cohen and other representatives to the 902 talks," Manglona added.

Although he expects the federalization plan to crop up in the meeting with the legislature, the Senate president maintained the informal discussion is one chance "to get to know each other as well as what issues to lay on the table" in future consultation.

House Speaker Diego T. Benavente acknowledged, however, that labor and immigration issues can be best addressed by the CNMI 902 team in its meeting with the U.S. delegation.

"Our meeting will be an opportunity for both sides, not only for Mr. Cohen, to hear from the legislature here (and) to hear from the administration of the U.S. government about their positions of some of these issues that should be in the 902 discussion," he told in a separate interview.

Cohen, who arrived last night, begins the consultation talks today with the local panel led Lt. Gov. Jesus R. Sablan. The team also includes three members from the legislature: Manglona, Benavente and Tinian Sen. Joaquin Adriano.



JOHN S. DELROSARIO JR.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Despite the low turnout of tourist, this vendor at the Bird Island look out sells coconut for tourists.

INTERNATIONAL DATELINES

CHINA

On target: Lawyers and accountants

Chinese tax collectors will target high-earning accountants, lawyers and sports stars this year as the cash-strapped government tries to wrest more revenue from China's newly rich. The three groups join entertainers, stock speculators and landlords, who topped last year's list of tax targets, the official China Daily reported Sunday. Personal income tax collections grew 30 percent last year, the newspaper said. China is trying to revive slowing economic growth with a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure spending program, and has tried to tighten loopholes in tax collections. Once considered unnecessary parasites of capitalism, accountants and lawyers now number about 170,000, up from almost zero before China launched its economic reforms 20 years ago, China Daily said in its Business Weekly edition.

WASHINGTON

Clinton calls for volunteering

Americans should make Monday's Martin Luther King Jr. holiday "a day on, not a day off" by joining a nationwide volunteer campaign, President Clinton said Saturday. With Vice President Al Gore and District of Columbia Mayor Anthony Williams, Clinton planned to set an example with his own community service project at a home for the elderly in northwest Washington. It's part of a drive by

the administration's Americorps national service program to deploy 100,000 volunteers nationwide on Monday. "To honor what would have been Dr. King's 70th birthday, I urge all Americans to rise to the highest calling in our land — the calling of active citizenship," the president said in his weekly radio broadcast from the Oval Office. In conjunction with the holiday, the White House released a report from Clinton's long-floundering initiative on race relations.

JORDAN

Drought declared

Jordan has begun approving aid packages to help farmers hit hard by drought, the country's agriculture minister said Sunday. Mijhem Khreisha said the Cabinet on Saturday declared "a state of drought" and approved creation of a fund to provide \$16 million in interest-free loans to livestock breeders to help them buy barley and grain. The government also will allocate \$1 million for livestock medicine and will help provide water for livestock from desert wells, Khreisha said. He said water rationing for the public will continue, but declined to say if there will be any changes to the current program, under which water is pumped to families one day a week.

Rainfall accounts for about 60 percent of Jordan's water. Khreisha said rainfall in December and January was just 2 percent of the seasonal average. The country also gets water from the Jordan River. It lacks the resources to build desalination plants like those in the Gulf.

TURKEY

Kurdish chief's whereabouts secret

The Kurdish rebel leader whose presence in Italy sparked a diplomatic row with Turkey has reached a new destination, his supporters said Sunday, refusing to disclose the site. After two months of controversy and futile requests for asylum, Abdullah Ocalan left Italy Saturday, the Italian premier's office. Ocalan had reached his destination safely, according to a faxed statement Sunday by the Germany-based Kurdish news agency DEM, which cited officials of Ocalan's Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK. But nobody, including the PKK and Ocalan's lawyer in Italy, would say where that was. Italian media said he had flown to Moscow. But Russia's ambassador denied Sunday that the rebel leader had entered his country. Ocalan's lawyer in Rome, Luigi Saraceni, said on Italian state radio that his client would issue a statement in the next few days. Ocalan's PKK has been fighting for Kurdish autonomy in southeastern Turkey for 14 years. The conflict has killed about 37,000 people.

Le Pen faces right-wing challenge

A French far-right politician leading a highly publicized rebellion within the National Front said Sunday he will run for the party's presidency at a special congress next weekend. Bruno Megret challenged party leader Jean-Marie Le Pen in December by defiantly calling for

the congress, and Le Pen has refused to attend. "We are not excluding anyone," Megret said in an interview on French television. "It's Jean-Marie Le Pen who is setting himself apart from the movement by not coming to the congress." Megret, the National Front's former No. 2 man, said he has enough support to take over Le Pen's position. Le Pen has expelled Megret and his loyalists from the party, calling them "insurgents." He said Saturday that he was "very confident" in the National Front's future despite the crisis. "It's a regrettable accident, but we will triumph," Le Pen said.

MALAYSIA

Preparations made for polls

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's ruling coalition will meet after the Muslim holy month of Ramadan to discuss preparations for a general election, news reports said Sunday. Mohamed Rahmat, secretary-general of the ruling Barisan Nasional Coalition, did not indicate when elections would be held, saying the prime minister would choose the date. Mohamed, who is also information minister, called on coalition parties to prepare their election machinery now. "Even though Barisan is strong and does not face any problem in winning the election we cannot afford to be complacent and rest on our laurels," Mohamed was quoted as saying in the Star newspaper. Analysts have interpreted recent events in Malaysia as indications that general elections, scheduled for April 2000, may be called earlier.